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AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PASS TO AMCONSUL QUEBEC
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SUBJECT: CHAVEZ CLAIMS VENEZUELA HAS "GEOPOLITICAL IMPORTANCE"

CLASSIFIED BY: Robin Meyer, Political Counselor; REASON: 1.4(D)

Summary

11. (SBU) President Chavez and the Venezuelan Foreign Ministry made statements during the week of December 28 regarding the Spanish criticism of Venezuela's role at the Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen and U.S. policy toward Iran. Both statements are suggestive of President Chavez's interest in asserting a role for Venezuela on the world stage. End Summary.

Spanish Criticism Means We Matter

12. (SBU) On December 30, President Chavez asserted that Venezuela had attained "geopolitical importance" by virtue of accusations from Spanish Environment Minister Elena Espinosa about Venezuelan intransigence at the Copenhagen Climate Change Summit. Claiming that Espinosa had "blamed Venezuela, Bolivia, and Cuba for sabotaging the Summit," something he assured was otherwise untrue, he added that her comments reflected "something positive. They recognize our importance in the world geopolitical game. Our voice is respected in all corners of the globe."

13. (SBU) In remarks printed in Spanish daily Publico on December 27 and then reported in the Venezuelan press, Espinosa had accused Chavez and Morales of refusing to support the final agreement in Copenhagen "in order to defend their natural resources," arguing that growth expectations of Venezuela and Bolivia rely heavily on gas and petroleum exports. "Perhaps they were worried about the impact of an emissions accord on their economic growth." (Note: Espinosa was responding to a question about the countries that had "boycotted" the final Copenhagen agreement. She never accused Venezuela or the other countries of "sabotage," nor did she assign them blame for the Summit's failure. End Note.) On December 29, the Venezuelan Foreign Ministry (MFA) issued a statement denouncing Espinosa's criticisms, rejecting them as "mistaken, fanciful, and unfortunate declarations," and adding that it hoped that her remarks "did not represent the official position of the Spanish government." The statement went on to assert that the GBRV had adopted a "transparent" position on climate change, "in contrast to the European countries," and claimed that it had also been "responsible for alerting the international community of the secret accord" that the U.S. and other countries had wanted to "ram" through the Summit.

MFA accuses U.S. of "attempting to destabilize" Iran

¶4. (SBU) On December 30, the MFA issued a statement alleging U.S. government "attempts at destabilization against the people and government of Iran." It went on to accuse an unnamed "group of governments" of collaborating with the U.S. in a "campaign to divide and spread violence among Iranians, in contravention of elemental norms of peace, non-interference and respect for sovereignty." The statement concluded by noting the GBRV's condemnation of acts that "represent a threat to peace, international stability, and the laws and institutions of Iran, which guarantee the peaceful coexistence of the Iranian people."
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